

Cabinet

Report of the Cabinet Member for Transport

Improving York's City Centre - Reinvigorate York Public Realm Improvement Projects: Exhibition Square/Theatre Interchange project.

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the next phase of the Re-invigorate work programme The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval to implement the Theatre Interchange project (which is part of the Better Bus Area Fund, or 'BBAF', programme) as the first phase of a rolling programme of linked public realm improvement works at Exhibition Square (which is part of the Reinvigorate York Initiative).
2. The current programme is designed to deliver the refurbished Exhibition Square by May 2015 when the Art Gallery, which is currently undergoing major refurbishment, re-opens to the public. In order to meet this deadline the Theatre Interchange aspect of the scheme will need to start this summer.

Background

3. This report follows on from the previous Reinvigorate York report to Cabinet on 1 April 2014. It also provides a summary of feedback received from detailed consultation with the current bus operators using the square and a wider consultation process involving the public.
4. This scheme will be funded out of the £3m Capital budget already agreed for the Reinvigorate York programme (£730K) and £270K funding from the Better Bus Area Fund (BBAF) Economic Infrastructure Fund (EIF) Capital Budget.
5. A report to Cabinet on 1 April 2014 set out the context for six priority Reinvigorate York public realm improvements projects and provided

an overview of consultation held on three projects at Exhibition Square and linked Theatre Interchange scheme; Duncombe Place/Blake Street junction; and Fossgate. An overall Reinvigorate York Community Impact Assessment (CIA) including project specific elements for the Fossgate scheme was also provided.

6. A summary of community engagement was also outlined in the 1 April Cabinet report. Consultation events which were of particular relevance to the Exhibition Square/Theatre Interchange project included: a stakeholder workshop event (30 January 2014); three staffed exhibitions (25 January, 5 February and 11 February 2014); presentations to the Conservation Area Appraisal Panel (4 February 2014), Quality Bus Partnership (13 February 2014) and the Equalities Advisory Group (5 March 2014). Bespoke meetings were also held with key stakeholders including the York Museums Trust, Rushbond (proposed St Leonards Place Hotel) and York University (Kings Manor).
7. Further consultation has occurred with the bus operators regularly using the Square and this report also outlines the main findings from this consultation activity.

Context

Exhibition Square and the linked Theatre Interchange Project

8. Exhibition Square is a major city centre space with unique views of the Minster. The Square lies at the heart of some of the city's most important cultural assets. It is surrounded by high quality listed buildings and former precinct walls of St Mary's Abbey, which are themselves, a scheduled ancient monument. Exhibition Square is also a crucial location for bus services for residents and people living in rural areas to the north of the city, handling around 750,000 bus passenger journeys a year.
9. The proposed improvements at Exhibition Square/Theatre Interchange will also complement other civic development initiatives and investment being made in the immediate area (for example, redevelopment of the Art Gallery, the Theatre Royal and the former council offices at St Leonard's Place).
10. Exhibition Square proposals are aimed at improving the quality of public space, which is poor and deteriorating, and making the Square a better place for residents and visitors to use and enjoy. The vision

is to create a beautiful public space providing a setting to enjoy the range of architecture around it and which acts as a forecourt to the Art Gallery and is sufficiently flexible to enable a range of public cultural activities to take place.

11. The environment at the Theatre Interchange is currently poor both for bus passengers (in terms of the quality of the facilities provided and from a bus operations perspective). The poor environment also has a negative impact on other pedestrian users within the area. Theatre Interchange proposals are aimed at improving the amenity of the Theatre Interchange bus stops for passengers and making changes to bus stopping facilities to improve the amenity of the Exhibition Square area as a whole.
12. The benefit in terms of opportunities to provide environmental improvements has been carefully considered against any potential detriment to bus operations. The outcomes of these considerations are outlined later in this report.
13. Specific interventions for the Theatre Interchange element of the scheme include: increasing circulation space for visitors to the Square, pedestrians and bus passengers by reducing the size of the existing bus lay-by; replacing the two existing bus shelters with two new more attractive shelters; and providing real time information and more/better seats for bus passengers.
14. The aim is to complete the Exhibition Square/Theatre Interchange project no later than May 2015 when the Art Gallery, which is currently undergoing major refurbishment, re-opens to the public. The intention is to phase the construction works as part of a rolling programme over a period of nine months. The first stage will be the Theatre Interchange aspect which is the subject of this report and which is due to start in August. The wider Exhibition Square project will commence at a later date and will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet in September.

Consultation - General Public

15. This report briefly outlines the consultation feedback for the Theatre Interchange project, including proposals to mitigate changes to bus operations. More detailed information can be found in Supplementary Document 1 which can be viewed online. Consultation feedback and proposals for the Exhibition Square

aspect of the project will be brought to Members at a meeting of the Cabinet in September.

16. Direct questions were asked at consultation relating to the proposed reallocation of space at Exhibition Square from bus services to pedestrians, the proposed provision of a single, larger shelter for bus passengers to replace the two existing shelters and the proposed type of paving to be used.

Consultation - Bus Operations

Summary of Key Findings

17. A presentation was made to a meeting of the Quality Bus Partnership Performance Group on 13 February 2014. Representatives of Bus Operators currently using the Exhibition Square bus service area included First, Reliance and Stephenson's of Easingwold. In addition a number of individual discussions have occurred with the bus operators to gain an in-depth understanding of their views.
18. A number of trials have been conducted in order to fully research the impact on bus services of the proposed changes to the overall design and specifically changes to the lay-by on bus services. The objective was to test whether it is possible to operate the tour bus service with no more than one vehicle in Exhibition Square at any one time. Transdev, operators of the service, successfully managed this during the trial, and it was concluded to have been successful.
19. In more general terms, the tour bus team were supportive of the proposal for Exhibition Square as they felt that the upgrade to the fabric of the area would make it a more pleasant environment for their passengers and would hence improve the attractiveness of their services.
20. However, the tour bus company did raise a concern that the currently proposed lay-by arrangement would make it difficult for them to be able to get into the right hand lane to go into Gillygate and they were keen that the council should consider changes to the junction to mitigate this problem. Officers have taken note of this request, which will be monitored as the scheme progresses.
21. Proposed changes to the bus stops and the provision of two new standard Foster shelters glazed carriageway have been well received by the bus operators. Under the current design one of the existing

shelters is only used for infrequent bus services and the new shelter will provide additional waiting capacity for more frequent bus services. In addition bus operators welcome additional benefits, which include:

- Enhancements to public realm offering a much improved waiting environment within the Square
- Shelters which have Real Time Information display
- No actual reduction in sheltered capacity for waiting Passengers
- Integral lighting within the shelters for increased security
- An improved relationship between the location of the shelters and the bus stopping points

22. Table 1 below summarises the overall potential impact and mitigation strategy on the bus services currently using Exhibition Square.

Table 1: Impact and Mitigation Strategy

Service(s)	Impact	Mitigation Strategy	Notes
1, 5/5A, 6, 19, M15	Small changes to design of pull-in. Changes to design and location of shelter.	None required	Proposal will improve amenity of stops for passengers on these services.
29, 30, 30X, 31, 31X, 40 (AM only)	Services will no longer wait time at Exhibition Square.	Services can instead wait time at Memorial Gardens	
40 (afternoon journeys)	Services will no longer be able to turn around at Exhibition Square	Service will instead have to turn using Station Gyrotory, taking any layover time at Memorial Gardens	To note that this only involves one bus operator with 3 bus services in the afternoon
Tour buses	Change to layover arrangements	Limit tour bus movements to one in Square at any one time	Proposal will improve amenity of stops for passengers on these services.

23. Should Members decide to proceed with the recommendations of this report it should be noted that a second stage Safety Audit will be

carried out and it is proposed that any design amendments due to the Audit.

Council Plan

24. Delivery of the proposals will help to achieve a number of the themes of the Council Plan, including :-

Create jobs and grow the economy – it is considered that the wider aims to improve the quality of York City Centre will contribute to the economic attractiveness of the city in comparison with competitor cities, and boost investor confidence. Substantial pedestrian and public space improvements on key links in the city for tourists and shoppers will improve the amenity of York City Centre and increase the number of visitor trips to the city, and therefore increase visitor spend.

Get York Moving – improvements to streets and spaces will improve safety for pedestrian and cyclists, and local businesses, and will help to create a better environment for people to consider using alternative modes of transport. Improvements to bus stopping areas will encourage greater use of bus services and lead to an improved experience for passengers boarding buses at Exhibition Square/ St Leonard's Place, in line with the objectives of the Better Bus Area Fund programme.

Build Strong Communities – Providing better public spaces will improve public interaction and the extra footway space will reduce conflict.

Protect vulnerable people – York's streets and spaces need to work for everyone, and there are many significant issues that need to be resolved involving communities of interest as defined by the 2010 Disability Act. More space for pedestrians, higher quality paving, more considered repairs and re-bedding of surface materials, increases in seating and better quality seating, improved lighting, and a new approach to wayfinding will all help to improve physical and intellectual access to services and facilities for all. The additional pedestrian space at junctions will ease problems for vulnerable people using the area.

Protect the Environment – proposals will be delivered in accordance with the Council's sustainable objectives, and will enhance the public realm, heritage and townscape of the city centre which will support the sustainable growth of the city and coordinate

with the vision and objectives of the Reinvigorate York initiative. Modal shift as a result of improving bus facilities and services and improved conditions for active modes will reduce carbon emissions by the city and improve the amenity of the city centre.

Proposals for Theatre Interchange (BBAF)

25. The Theatre Interchange design (see Plan at Annex 1) which Members are being asked to approve will include the following key elements:
- i) Reducing the space for bus services to a single lane and removing the right turn manoeuvre by buses.
 - ii) Repositioning the vehicular access in to Kings Manor and paving in new Yorkstone flags. Sensory paving will be installed to help blind and visually impaired people to navigate their way through the area.
 - iii) Providing one space only for the City Tour bus with no reduction in bus stops for existing services.
 - iv) Providing two new single shelters to replace the existing shelters for all bus services. This will allow people to see buses as they approach and will help people who are not as mobile to get to bus stops more easily.
 - v) The new shelter for bus passengers will be more attractively styled and will be provided with seating. Real time information will also be provided so that passengers would be aware of which stop their bus is departing from. Stops will also be fitted with near field communications (NFC) technology, which can aid people with impaired vision and hearing.
 - vi) Providing access for Royal Mail vans to the post box.
 - vii) Keeping provision for late night taxis.
 - viii) Lengthening and widening the central pedestrian crossing island. This will help to ease pedestrian flow at the crossing.
 - ix) Surfacing the bus lay-by in grey coloured Hardicrete and installing new granite bus stop kerbs. Paving the footway at

St Leonard's Place in new Yorkstone paving flags and paving the extended pedestrian area of Exhibition Square with reclaimed Yorkstone paving.

- x) Realigning the kerbs at the lay-by adjacent to the Theatre Royal.

Community Impact Assessment

- 26. An overall Community Impact Assessment (CIA) for Reinvigorate York public realm projects has been prepared and includes a project specific assessment for the Theatre Interchange scheme. The CIA is a live document. It will be updated on a regular basis as projects are progressed and can be viewed on-line (see Supplementary Document 2).

Next Steps

- 27. Key project milestones for the Exhibition Square/Theatre Interchange project are outlined in Table 2 below. Winter working has been identified as a key construction constraint and critical driver for the project. The BBAF works need to start on site in August so that construction can be completed before the winter moratorium at the end of November. The intention is to phase the construction works as part of a rolling programme over a period of nine months.

Table 2: Key Project Milestones

ID	Milestone	Timescale
1	Cabinet approve Theatre Interchange	1 July 2014
2	Prepare concept design Exhibition Square	May/July 2014
3	Exhibition Square concept design to Reinvigorate York Board	July 2014
4	Start site works start Theatre Interchange	Aug 2014
5	Cabinet approve Exhibition Square	2 September 2014
6	Start site works Exhibition Square	Sept 2014
7	Complete site works Theatre Interchange	End November 2014
8	Complete site works Exhibition Square	End April 2015

Implications

28. The following implications have been considered:

Financial

Members approved £3m capital for the Reinvigorate York programme in 4th September 2012. A sum of £600k has been set aside for Access to Footstreets, Wayfinding project and general projects leaving £2.4m to fund the named projects. A release of £490k was approved on 2nd April 2013 for King's Square and a release of £306k was approved on 1 April 2014 for Fossgate. This leaves unallocated funds of £1.6m.

The total cost of the Interchange project is £490k and also represents the match funding that the City of York provided to attract the BBAF to the city.

Human Resources (HR) No implications

Equalities A full community impact assessment is being carried out as part of an ongoing process for all Reinvigorate York schemes. A specific updated version can be viewed on-line (Supplementary Document 2).

Legal Listed building consent will be needed for any proposal to relocate the statue at Exhibition Square. Scheduled Monument Consent will be needed for works affecting the city walls adjacent to Exhibition Square.

Crime and Disorder Anticipated to be improved due to increased lighting and improved public realm.

Information Technology (IT) No implications.

Property No implications.

Risk Management An individual risk assessment will be undertaken for individual projects.

Recommendations

29. Members are asked to approve the overall design for the Theatre Interchange aspect of the Exhibition Square/Theatre Interchange project subject to further minor amendments been delegated to the Director of City and Environmental Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport.
30. Members are asked to approve the location of replacement bus shelters that offer significant improvements to the existing footways and bus shelters located within the Square.
31. Members are asked to note that a further report is planned for consideration by Cabinet in September, which will seek approval for the remaining aspects of the Exhibition Square project.

Reasons for recommendations:

- i. To enable progress of the Reinvigorate York Public Realm programme through agreement to the overall design for the interchange and noting progress on Exhibition Square
- ii. To improve arrangements for bus passengers within the area

Contact Details

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	Report Approved	✓	Date: 23.06.14
Specialist Implications Officer(s) <i>List information for all</i>			
Wards Affected:			Guildhall
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Background Papers:

Cabinet Report (1 April 2014): Improving York's City Centre - Reinvalidate York public realm Improvement Projects: outcome of consultation and proposals for Fossgate

<http://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=7647&Ver=4>

Better Bus Area Fund Bid (York 2012)

<http://www.york.gov.uk/info/200206/buses/382/buses/4>

York City Centre Movement and Accessibility Framework (JMP 2011)

http://www.york.gov.uk/site/scripts/google_results.aspx?q=York+City+Centre+Movement+and+Accessibility+Framework+&btnG=Go

York New City Beautiful (Prof Alan J Simpson 2010)

http://www.york.gov.uk/info/200406/ldf_evidence_base_documents/465/ldf_evidence_base_documents/36

Annexes

Annex 1: Plan of proposed Theatre Interchange

Supplementary Documents

SD1: Analysis of Consultation Responses, Comments and Feedback for Exhibition Square/Theatre Interchange (attached online only)

SD2: Reinvalidate York Community Impact Assessment (June 2014) (attached online only)